

DFEH News Brief

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SILICON VALLEY APARTMENT COMPLEX PAYS \$100,000 TO SETTLE ALLEGED DISCRIMINATION AGAINST TENANTS FROM INDIA

ELK GROVE, CA -- The California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) today announced the \$100,000 out-of-court settlement of a housing discrimination case against a large Sunnyvale, CA, apartment complex.

The owners and managers of the Remington Grove garden-style apartments on Sunnyvale's East Remington Drive were accused of refusing to rent the more expensive and more desirable cathedral ceiling apartments to people of Indian national origin, segregating them in less desirable portions of the complex. When potential renters from India expressed a preference for the more expensive apartments, they were allegedly steered instead to less expensive, low-ceiling apartments in buildings with a high concentration of Indian residents.

"The Fair Employment & Housing Act cannot be any clearer," said Governor Schwarzenegger's Secretary of State & Consumer Services, Rosario Marin. "Discrimination against anyone in the pursuit of housing is flatly illegal in California and will not be tolerated. The department has done another fine job of ensuring equality for all state residents, including those who are new to California."

The local fair housing group, Project Sentinel, conducted an investigation and found strong evidence of discrimination and segregation. On two different occasions, Project Sentinel sent "testers" to the apartment complex posing as applicants – one tester of Indian ancestry and one Caucasian. On one occasion, DFEH said the Indian tester was steered to a predominantly Indian portion of the complex. On the second occasion, the Caucasian "tester" was told one of the fancy apartments was available on the same day that the Indian "tester" was told it wasn't.

In addition to housing discrimination, DFEH also accused the owners of employment discrimination and retaliation against their assistant manager, Martin Perez. When he complained about the discrimination, DFEH says he was fired on suspicion of reporting the illegal activity to Project Sentinel.

Project Sentinel also accused the owners of violating a recently enacted California law by threatening tenants with eviction unless they could show proof of permanent, legal residence in the U.S. A 2007 California law makes it unlawful to ask tenants about their immigration status.

In settling the case, the owners of the apartment complex did not admit to any liability. As part of the \$100,000 out-of-court settlement, the owners also agreed to attend fair housing training, maintain a non-discrimination policy, display a fair housing sign and copies of a DFEH fair housing brochure.

"As we approach next year's milestone 50th anniversary celebration of California's pioneering fair housing law, which established California as the national leader in ending housing discrimination and segregation, it is unfortunate that discrimination still exists," DFEH Director Phyllis Cheng said. "This is yet another reminder of why California's Fair Employment & Housing Act is so essential to the California Dream."

The mission of the DFEH is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations and from hate violence. For more information, visit our Web site at www.dfeh.ca.gov.

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